

## MEMORIAL

OF THE

GRANDDAUGHTERS OF MARSHAL ROCHAMBEAU,

IN RELATION

*To their claim for remuneration for his services during the war of the revolution.*

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JULY 7, 1838.

Ordered to be printed.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States :*

It does not accord with the feelings of the undersigned, granddaughters of Marshal Rochambeau, to address themselves to your honorable body on the present occasion. They owe it to themselves, and to the honor of the name they bear, to declare, that when they did so, at a former period, (now six years since,) it was at the express recommendation and under the immediate auspices of the General Lafayette; and with the approbation of the American minister near the court of his Majesty the King of the French.

They were told, that after the late evidence given by the American people and Government, of the noble sentiments of sympathy and gratitude entertained by them towards the illustrious strangers who had participated in their struggle for national independence, they would seize with alacrity every fresh opportunity of ratifying the reputation so justly obtained to them among nations, that a really great republic is never unmindful of distinguished services received.

The prompt assistance afforded to the family of Admiral de Grasse, (liberal and munificent when compared with the then embarrassed finances of the Government,) was adduced as special guarantee of the favor with which the voice of a Rochambeau would be heard.

Such counsel was the more calculated to decide the undersigned to waive that reserve which naturally accorded with their individual feelings, since it was not only authorized but enjoined on them by their illustrious ancestor, to preserve as a family tradition and legacy the eminent services he had rendered the American people. It was in the last period of his existence, that, surrounded by his family, he said, "cherish and respect the attachment which binds me to the American nation; and if ever adversity assails you, appeal to them with confidence for relief."

In accordance with these recommendations, a brief and simple statement was made to your honorable body in 1832, that although the male descen-

dants of Marshal Rochambeau were favored by fortune, and disclaimed any recognition by a foreign Government save that of their ancestral laurels, yet, that reverses had assailed those who were induced to address you. That the undersigned have been pained at the course they consented to pursue, they will not disguise from your honorable body. They can only attribute, however, the silence with which their appeal has been attended, to the imperfect knowledge generally existing of the signal participation which their ancestor had in the immediate acts which crowned the national independence; and they believe that it will be rendering a service to the great cause of historical truth, as well as to the perpetuation of that harmony and sympathy existing between the two nations, associated in the struggle for liberty, to offer, on the present occasion, a few explanatory facts, little known or appreciated at the period of their occurrence. That they were not then publicly proclaimed, is unquestionably to be attributed to the modesty which so eminently characterized the Marshal Rochambeau; since it was only through his *memoirs* written by himself, and published after his death, in the year 1808, and in pursuance with his testamentary orders, that we are fully informed of the influence which his opinions and wishes had with the Commander-in-chief of the French naval forces; to which is chiefly to be attributed the selection made of the Chesapeake as the rendezvous for the combined forces, and *solely* to which is due the succor in troops embarked in the fleet at St. Domingo. The conviction that his own private councils lead to that special destination of the fleet which tended so eminently to the consummation of national independence, is strongly evidenced throughout his memoirs. The following extracts attest the firmness and durability of these impressions. It having been decided at the conference of Weathersfield, in conformity with the desire of General Washington, that a combined attack should be made upon New York, should Admiral de Grasse decide to force the passage of that port—"I forwarded," he says, "the articles of the conference to Count de Grasse. I observed to him, that he ought to know better than myself, the possibility of forcing the port, &c. &c. Finally I presented to him, as my private opinion, an expedition into the Chesapeake against the army of Lord Cornwallis, which I believed more practicable, and more unexpected by the enemy. I requested him to demand in the most pressing manner, of the Governor of St. Domingo, the use, for three months, of the French brigade under the orders of M. de St. Simon, which was destined to act with the Spaniards, as also a loan of 1,200,000 francs, to secure the success of the operation." The son of Marshal Rochambeau had accompanied this despatch, in order to explain more precisely his views. "On arriving at St. Domingo, the Count de Grasse found there the frigate which carried my despatches; he communicated them immediately to the commander of St. Domingo, and to M. de Solano, the Spanish admiral, who both adopted my plan against the army of Cornwallis. They contributed to it with all their power; the first in lending us for three months the corps of 3,000 men under the orders of M. de St. Simon; and the second, by furnishing Count de Grasse, from the Havana, with the 1,200,000 francs required for the operation. I received, on the 5th August, the reply of the Count de Grasse, announcing to me his arrival in the Chesapeake for the last of August, with all the aid I had desired of him."

The admiral, in this reply, dated at the cape 8th July, 1781, and preserved in the archives of the marine at Paris, after stating the number of

troops he had obtained the use of, (in all 3,000 men, together with 10 pieces of field ordnance, &c.) says: "*The entire expedition in regard to these troops has been arranged only in consequence of your request*, without even the previous knowledge of the Ministers of France and Spain. I have also done all in my power to obtain for you the 1,200,000 livres, which you say is absolutely necessary."

Whatever were the merits of the plan for attacking New York, (which the undersigned are certainly very far from contesting,) it is not less true, that to the representations of Marshal Rochambeau was principally owing the execution of his plan for the co-operation of the fleet; and that fortune having crowned it with success, and thus established the ascendancy of the allied arms, he may justly be proclaimed the author of a military operation, the importance of which, in its results, was second to none during the great contest for American freedom.

It was immediately upon his return to France, and in his first interview with that virtuous Monarch, Louis the XVI., that his Majesty, addressing him, said: "To you, Marshal Rochambeau, and to the capture of Lord Cornwallis, am I indebted for the peace."

The testimony of the immortal Washington is on record to show that his noble zeal in the cause absorbed every consideration of self; and the esteem borne our ancestor by that great man, evidenced until the hour of his death, must carry conviction to the breast of every American, of the purity and harmony which presided over their union during a period of so much trial.

Although the destruction of most our ancestor's private papers during the French revolution deprives us of the ability to prove the magnitude of his pecuniary sacrifices, when engaged in the American war, the diminution of his fortune, during the three years he was engaged in it, was matter of notoriety to all who had the honor of his intimacy. No one was better able to appreciate these losses than the illustrious Lafayette, who did not cease to repeat to many now living—"After what the Congress has done for me, it cannot fail to act with equal generosity and nobleness towards the descendants of Marshal Rochambeau. In applying to the President on their behalf, I have fulfilled a duty which I have long desired to do, in justice to the memory of my chief and model; he, whose sacrifices in the American cause, *were far greater than my own.*" And in a letter addressed to a member of the family in 1832, and now in our possession, he says: "I have just made a fresh application to the President of the United States, and although Congress, in their goodness and delicacy towards me, have given the character of an indemnity to the magnificent present bestowed on me, I have not neglected to represent how much I am personally interested in consequence of this exception made in my favor, that the situation of a family, whose chief rendered such eminent services to the cause of independence, should be taken into consideration."

The nature of the general services rendered by France, and of which the Marshal Rochambeau was the immediate agent, may be appreciated from the following facts, viz: On the 1st May, 1781, General Washington, in his military diary, after detailing the deficiency in every department of the army, says: "In a word, instead of having every thing in readiness to take the field, we have nothing; and instead of having the prospect of a glorious offensive campaign before us, we have a bewildered and gloomy prospect of a defensive one, unless we should receive a powerful aid of

ships, land troops, and money from our generous allies, and these at present are too contingent to build upon."

It was precisely eight days after this note that our father, the son of Marshal Rochambeau, and Commodore de Barras, arrived from France, the bearers of six millions of francs, for the use of the American army; and with the important intelligence, confided *solely* to the Marshal Rochambeau, that the whole fleet of Admiral de Grasse would co-operate with the army in July or August. By this timely supply of money, and 28 ships of the line, transporting the troops obtained at the single requisition of our ancestor, the campaign was changed from a defensive to an offensive one. Your honorable body know the results. But the undersigned will not trespass further upon the attention of your honorable body.

They have thus briefly recapitulated the services personally rendered by their noble ancestor, in virtue of which, they had taken the liberty of addressing you on a former occasion, because they considered it due to themselves to prove that their claims to your attention were such as to excuse, if not to authorize, the counsel they had consented to pursue.

THERESE CONSTANCE de ROCHAMBEAU,

*Comtesse d'Ambrugeac.*

AUGUSTINE ELEONORE de ROCHAMBEAU,

*Marquise de la Gorce.*